Recent developments in (the theory of) ergativity

BLOCK C

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- Recall the universal involving ergativity splits based on T/M/A (Tense/Mood/Aspect):

\[\begin{array}{c|c|c}
\text{Tense} & \text{Mood} & \text{Aspect} \\
\hline
\text{perfective} & \Rightarrow & \text{imperfective} & \Rightarrow & \text{progressive} \\
\end{array}\]

[Coon 2010, following Dixon 1994]

- ERG/ABS is always on the past/perfective/indicative side
- NOM/ACC is always on the non-past/imperfective/irrealis side

➤ Coon (2010): offers a proposal for why this might be so

- the proposal proceeds in two steps; the first:

\[\text{(2) ERGATIVE SPLITS AS BI-CLAUSALITY}
\]

In non-perfective aspects which show “split ergativity”, ergative Case is absent in transitive clauses because the subject is assigned Case not by the lexical verb, but by an intransitive aspectual verb.

[Coon 2010:148]

- The general schema for such non-perfective aspects is thus as follows:

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{(3) [ SUBJDP, ASPECTUALVERB [ EC, PREDVERB OBJDP ]]}
\end{array}\]

where “EC” can be:

- a trace of SUBJDP (in the event that ASPECTUALVERB is a raising predicate)
- PRO (in the event that ASPECTUALVERB is a control predicate)

QUESTION: Why would (3) give rise to the appearance of a NOM/ACC pattern?

(Remember: to answer this question, one must consider what happens when PREDVERB is transitive, as well as when it is intransitive!)

- It turns out that analyses of specific ergative splits in particular languages along the lines of (3) have already been proposed

- for example, Laka’s (2006) analysis of “split ergativity” in Basque—and in particular, of the appearance of a NOM/ACC pattern in the Basque progressive
We’ve already seen the behavior of Basque in “core” clauses:

(4) a. [\(S\) Otso-a] etorri da.
    \(\text{wolf-ART}_{sg}\) arrived \(\text{AUX}(be)\)
    ‘The wolf has arrived.’

   b. [\(A\) Ehiztari-ak] [\(P\) otso-a] harrapatu du
    \(\text{hunter-ART}_{sg}\) \(\text{wolf-ART}_{sg}\) caught \(\text{AUX}(have)\)
    ‘The hunter has caught a/the wolf.’ \([\text{Laka 1996, annotations mine}]\)

but here’s what happens in the progressive:

(5) a. [\(S\) emakume-a] dantza-n ari da.
    \(\text{woman-ART}_{sg}\) \(\text{dance-LOC}\) \(\text{PROG}\) \(\text{AUX}(be)\)
    ‘The woman is dancing.’

    \(\text{woman-ART}_{sg}\) \(\text{bread-ART}_{sg}\) \(\text{eat-NMZ-LOC}\) \(\text{PROG}\) \(\text{AUX}(be)\)
    ‘The woman is eating the bread.’ \([\text{Laka 2006:174}]\)

As a first observation, note that in the progressive, Basque doesn’t—strictly speaking—shift into a NOM/ACC pattern
   o Rather, all 3 of the arguments have the same marking
      – sometimes called a “neutral” marking system (e.g., in \textit{WALS})
      (note, of course, that a “neutral” alignment is—strictly speaking—a particular instance of NOM/ACC alignment; the point is that it is not unambiguously so)
   ➤ but it does shift out of its normally ERG/ABS Case-alignment
      o which is what \textit{Laka} sets out to explain

\textit{Laka}’s proposal \textit{ari}, the “progressive marker”, is syntactically just a verb

its complement is a \textit{locative} adpositional phrase
   o the complement of the locative adposition is an event-nominal
     (e.g., \textit{dantza} ‘dance (n.)’ and \textit{ja-te} ‘eat-NMZ’)
     – which may, itself, take an argument
       (like an ordinary event-nominal)

\textbf{NOTE}: the -te/tze suffix, which I gloss NMZ, is a nominalizer that can turn verbs into nominals, not unlike English -\textit{ing}

➤ Note that the \textit{locative} part of this story is far from arbitrary:

“The majority of progressive forms in our [crosslinguistic] database derive from expressions involving locative elements.” \([\text{Bybee et al. 1994:192}]\)

“The most widespread parallel is between progressive aspect and expressions referring to the place where something is located, though in some languages, as noted below, this locative form of the verb is also used with habitual meaning, i.e. is \textit{imperfective rather than just progressive}” \([\text{Comrie 1978:98, emphasis added}]\)
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Laka (2006:188):

(6) Ik ben aan het werken. (Dutch)
   I am LOC the working
   ‘I am working.’

(7) He is on hunting. (Middle English)

(8) Mae Rhiannon yn cyysgu. (Welsh)
   is Rhiannon in sleep
   ‘Rhiannon is sleeping.’

• In fact, even in (modern) English:
  ◦ while the grammaticalized progressive doesn’t show overt signs of locative
    morphology, three are other associated (and interpretively similar)
    constructions that do:

(9) John is working.

(10) a. John is engaged in work.
    b. John is engaged in working.

(‘in’ being a locative preposition, of course)

➤ Recall now the discussion from BLOCK B regarding the difference between what
we might consider the semantic or thematic structure of predication, and the
syntactic relation among the relevant elements
  ◦ while they sometimes (often? usually?) go hand in hand, this is not always so

• in particular, we saw a kind of light-verb construction, where what we might
  consider the main semantic or thematic predicate was—syntactically speaking—a
  complement to the light verb
  ◦ and the light-verb was—again, syntactically speaking—the main verb of the
    clause

(11) Tyi a-cha’l-e k’ay
    PRFV SETA2-do-DTV song
    ‘You sang.’

(12) Jon-ek dantza egin d-φ-u-φ.
    Jon-ERG dance do 3.ABS-sg.ABS-have-3sg.ERG
    ‘Jon danced.’

➤ The idea is that what’s going on in Basque progressives is quite similar:
  ◦ we might consider the “main predicates” in (5a–b) (repeated below) to be
    dantza (‘dance’) and ja(-te) (‘eat(-ing)’), respectively
    – in the semantic or thematic sense
The lack of ERG marking on the agent in (13b) is therefore completely expected

- since (13b), as now conceived, is an intransitive clause
  (RECALL: it is entirely uncontroversial that oblique phrases do not factor into the calculus of transitivity)
- We might think of this in the following terms:
  - the embedding structure created by the verb *ari* bifurcates what-was-previously-thought-of-as-a-single-clause into two separate Case domains, as far as Case calculus is concerned
    - each Case domain containing only a single noun-phrase
      ⇒ that noun-phrase gets marked with ABS Case

- As Laka shows, this approach—of viewing *ari* simply as an ordinary verb—is supported by the following facts:
  I. the so-called “progressive marker” *ari* can take not only locative PPs, but other kind of PPs as well:

(14) emakume-a oihu-ka ari da.
    woman-ARTsg scream-ITER engaged AUX(be)
    Literally: ‘The woman is engaged in a repeated scream.’ [Laka 2006:182]
    - which looks like the behavior we’d expect from a verb proper (cf. *speak to, speak about, speak with*)
      - rather than a grammaticalized functional element

II. *ari* can itself undergo nominalization by affixing the -te/tze suffix

---

1This follows trivially under a case-competition (Marantz 1991) approach—but not entirely trivially under a ERG-as-inherent-Case approach (Woolford 1997, 2006, Legate 2008, Aldridge 2004). Under the latter approach, we would have to add the assumption that *ari* itself is unaccusative (with respect to its single non-oblique argument), rather than unergative.
(15) emakume-a lan-ean ari-tze-a ona da.
woman-ARTsg work-LOC engaged-NMZ-ARTsg good AUX(be)
‘The woman’s engaging in work is good.’
[Laka 2006:183]

○ this contrasts with the behavior of modals, auxiliaries, and other verb-like particles in Basque:

(16) * emakume-a izan ahal-tze-a ona da.
woman-ARTsg be can-NMZ-ARTsg good AUX(be)
‘The woman’s engaging in work is good.’
[Laka 2006:183]

(similar, in a sense, to the impossibility of forming infinitival forms of certain modals—e.g., *to can)

III. ari can bear pretty much the full set of aspect markers that any other verb can
(\textit{-tu ‘PRFV’, -tzen ‘IMPF’, -ko ‘IRR’})

- So Basque, given Laka’s proposal, constitutes an existence proof that we can get the appearance of aspect-based split ergativity, when the supposed NOM/ACC alignment is really the result of a larger structure
  ○ in particular, a structure that involves embedding—in a way that bifurcates the supposed “single clause” into two separate Case domains

- Recall that there was a slight defect in using Basque as the exemplar of an aspect-based split between ERG/ABS and NOM/ACC
  ○ namely, that while Basque shifts out of its ERG/ABS pattern in the progressive, it doesn’t shift into a NOM/ACC alignment, narrowly defined
    – but rather, into a “neutral” alignment
Let’s look at Chol:

(17) PERFECTIVES
   a. TRANSLIVE
      Tyi \textit{k-mäñ-ā-φ} \textit{ixim}. (Chol)
      PRFV \textit{SETA1-buy-TV-SETB3 corn}
      'I bought corn.'
   b. INTRANSITIVE
      Tyi \textit{lok’-i-yoñ}. PRFV \textit{exit-ITV-SETB1}
      'I left.'

(18) IMPERFECTIVES
   a. TRANSLIVE
      Mi \textit{k-mäñ-φ} \textit{ixim}.
      IMPF \textit{SETA1-buy-SETB3 corn}
      'I buy corn.'
   b. INTRANSITIVE
      Mi \textit{k-lok’-el}.
      IMPF \textit{SETA1-exit-NMZ}
      'I leave.'

(19) PROGRESSIVE
   a. TRANSLIVE
      Choñkol \textit{k-jap-φ} \textit{jiñi kajpej}.
      PROG \textit{SETA1-drink-SETB3 DET coffee}
      'I’m drinking the coffee.'
   b. INTRANSITIVE
      Choñkol \textit{k-jaits’-el}.
      PROG \textit{SETA1-hit.PASV-NMZ}
      'I’m being hit.'

• what we see is that Chol also seems to have aspect-based split ergativity
  ○ grouping the imperfective together with the progressive
    (unlike Basque, which groups the imperfective together with perfective,
    contrasting with the progressive alone)

• In Chol, however, the alignment appears to regard agreement morphology, rather
  than Case-marking

• unlike the Basque scenario, however, Chol really does shift from an ERG/ABS
  alignment into a NOM/ACC alignment
  ○ specifically:
    – in the perfective, the verbal prefix targets only A,
      while the suffix targets P and S
    – in the imperfective and the progressive, the verbal prefix targets A and S,
      while the suffix targets P

• \textit{Coon 2010}: the non-perfective aspects (imperfective, progressive) involve an
  embedding structure
  ○ in particular, they involve an “aspectual marker” which is syntactically just a
    verb, and which embeds a nominal (or nominalization) as its complement
    – rendering them quite similar to English \textit{poss-ing} nominalizations
      (Abney 1987)
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- IMPORTANT INGREDIENT #1:
  the GEN (genitive) agreement marker in Chol is, independently of what one
  thinks of split ergativity, syncretic with the ERG marker—across the board
  – for example:

(20)  k-wakax
  SETA1-cow
  ‘my cow’
  [Coon 2010:46]

⇒ as a result, possessors of nominals will look the same (in terms of the agreement
  they trigger) as ERG arguments of verbs
  – As in Basque, then, we might revise our annotation of the relevant non-
    perfective data
  – for example:

(21)  TRANSITIVE PROGRESSIVE
  Choñkol [s [Poss k ]-[NP jap-φ jiñi kajpej ]].
  engaged  SETA1 - drink-SETB3 DET coffee
  ‘I’m drinking the coffee.’

- IMPORTANT INGREDIENT #2:
  as one could already discern from the examples in (17–18) and (19a), the
  “SETB” (a.k.a., ABS) marker for 3rd-person is phonologically null (marked φ)

⇒ (21) re-revised:

(22)  TRANSITIVE PROGRESSIVE
  Choñkol-φ [s [Poss k ]-[NP jap-φ jiñi kajpej ]].
  engaged-SETB3 SETA1 - drink-SETB3 DET coffee
  ‘I’m drinking the coffee.’

- As before: the matrix clause, so conceived, is a run-of-the-mill intransitive clause
  – since Chol lacks (verbal) unergatives, it is unsurprising that we find ABS
    agreement-marking in that clause
- the embedded domain is a possessed nominal —
  – the possessor triggers GEN marking (syncretic with ERG, across the language)
  – the internal argument of the event-nominal triggers ABS marking
    (also unsurprisingly)
- when the embedded verb (what we initially identified as the “main predicate”,
  before reanalyzing the “aspect marker” as also being a verb) is intransitive:
  – we find a suffix on it, which can independently be shown to nominalize verbs
    in the language

(23)  INTRANSITIVE PROGRESSIVE
  Choñkol-φ [s [Poss k ]-[NP jajts’-el ]].
  engaged-SETB3 SETA1 - hit.PASV-NMZ
  ‘I’m being hit.’
• when the embedded verb is transitive, no such suffix is visible
  ➤ however, regarding of one’s analysis of the “disappearance” of the
  nominalizing affix in this case, it can be independently shown that these still
  have the distribution/behavior of nominalizations:

(24) Much uts’aty [ [Poss a ]-[NP jats’-oñ ] ].
    NEG good Seta2 - hit-setB1
    ‘Your hitting me isn’t good.’
    [Coon 2010:117]

(see Coon 2010 for additional arguments to the same effect)

• This wraps up what I called “step one” of Coon’s account
  ◦ namely, showing that at least for certain aspect-based splits, bi-clausality is a
    viable explanation for what would otherwise look like a NOM/ACC (or, in the
    case of Basque, “neutral”) alignment

• this is a possible explanation of why we might find “splits”—at least in certain
  cases—but not yet an explanation of the directionality universal of splits
  ◦ given in (1), repeated here:

(1) \[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{ERG/ABS} & \text{NOM/ACC} \\
\text{perfective} & \text{imperfective} & \text{progressive}
\end{array}
\]

[Coon 2010, following Dixon 1994]

• that is where “step two” comes in...
Following Demirdache and Uribe-Etxebarria (2000) and (Klein, 1995), who adopt the classical decomposition of aspect proposed by Reichenbach (1947) —

(25) a.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{UT-T} \\
\text{TP} \\
\text{AspP} \\
T^0 \\
\text{AspP} \\
\text{AST-T} \\
\text{VP} \\
\text{EV-T} \\
\text{VP} \\
\end{array}
\]

\text{...}

\text{NOTE: not a syntactic representation!}

b. ABBREVIATIONS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UT-T</td>
<td>utterance time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AST-T</td>
<td>assertion time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EV-T</td>
<td>event time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| UT-T         | time at which the sentence is uttered            |
| AST-T        | time for which an assertion about the event is made |
| EV-T         | time of the event                                |

what (25) is meant to schematize is—for each syntactic head in \(\{T^0, \text{Asp}^0\}\)—the two times between which that head mediates

Demirdache and Uribe-Etxebarria (2000) (building on Hale 1986); using these as the building-blocks for tense and aspect “explains the pervasive use, crosslinguistically, of prepositions as well as locative, motion, directional, postural, and stance verbs to express temporal and aspectual relations”

⇒ Here’s why:

- Consider the present tense, for example
  - the present tense is a head \(T^0\) that essentially means WITHIN
    - namely, that \text{UT-T} is within \text{AST-T}
  - the progressive aspect:
    - is a head \(\text{Asp}^0\) meaning WITHIN
      - namely, that \text{AST-T} is within \text{EV-T}
  - the past tense, in contrast:
    - is a head \(T^0\) meaning AFTER
      - namely, that \text{UT-T} is after \text{AST-T}

- This account invokes a spatio-temporal connection
  - Crucially, this spatio-temporal connection is not a mere stipulation
    - Bybee et al. (1994:132): in a sample of the world’s languages (a stratified probability sample, with languages chosen from all over the world): “The majority of progressive forms in our database derive from expressions involving locative elements”
– verbs of *stance, posture, or location* are frequently used in progressive aspect constructions

(26) Bybee et al. (1994) survey:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LANGUAGE</th>
<th>progressive IS BASED ON...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isl. Carib</td>
<td><em>here</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocama</td>
<td><em>be located</em> + complement of Place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jivaro</td>
<td><em>be, sit</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alyawarra</td>
<td><em>sit, stay, be</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tahitian</td>
<td><em>be here</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’odham</td>
<td><em>sit, stay for a while</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baluchi</td>
<td>LOC + <em>be</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngambay</td>
<td><em>be seated</em> + verbal N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shuswap</td>
<td><em>be there, stay</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haka</td>
<td><em>place, participle</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahu</td>
<td><em>be in place, live</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td><em>stay, reside</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dakota</td>
<td><em>sit, stand</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tok Pisin</td>
<td><em>stop, stay</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kui</td>
<td><em>be, live, exist</em> + PRES PART</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maidu</td>
<td><em>be + participle</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buriat</td>
<td><em>be + gerund</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

– note also (6–8) (repeated below)

· as well as the (modern) English ‘engaged in’ construction, as well as the (modern) English constructions in (27–28), below

(6) Ik ben *aan* het werken. (Dutch)  
       ‘I am working.’

(7) He is *on* hunting. (Middle English)

(8) Mae Rhiannon *yn* cusgu. (Welsh)  
       ‘Rhiannon is sleeping.’ [Laka 2006:188]

(27) I am *in the middle of* washing the dishes.

(28) She is *at* rest.

➤ Suppose that this locative(/spatial) component is what’s responsible for the additional structure—sometimes resulting in full-fledged biclausality—involving in ergative splits

⇒ why would such locative(/spatial) structure be found in *non-perfective* contexts, but not in *perfective* ones?

– after all, the schema in (25a) (repeated below) is supposed to represent the general logic of tense and aspect in the clause
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Let’s take a look at some representations of different aspects, given this system:

(29) a. IMPERFECTIVE/PROGRESSIVE
   \[ \text{AST-T} \subseteq \text{EV-T} \]
   
   b. PERFECT
   \[ \text{EV-T} \subseteq \text{AST-T} \]

   c. PROSPECTIVE
   \[ \text{EV-T} \]

• Notably absent from this taxonomy is the perfective —

**NOTE:** While the two are often confused, the perfect and the perfective are quite different, and it is an open question—according to Coon—whether the perfect should be considered an “aspect” at all (see related discussions in Comrie 1976:52, as well as Alexiadou et al. 2003).

As for the perfective:

“In the perfective aspect, the event is viewed in its entirety, as a whole, without any internal structure. As with aspect more generally, this does not mean that no internal structure is present (i.e. the event need not be punctual), simply that none is asserted.”

[Coon 2010:192]

• Thus, the perfective can be thought of as the “opposite” of the imperfective (Klein 1995, Kratzer 1998)

(30) IMPERFECTIVE: \( \text{AST-T} \subseteq \text{EV-T} \)

PERFECTIVE: \( \text{EV-T} \subseteq \text{AST-T} \)

• in terms of the graphical representations used earlier:

(31) a. IMPERFECTIVE/PROGRESSIVE (=29a)
   \[ \text{AST-T} \]
   
   b. PERFECTIVE
   \[ \text{EV-T} \]

\[ - 11 - \]
Coon’s observation: while there are prepositions expressing the relation of AST-T to EV-T in (31a) (e.g., ‘in’, ‘within’), there seem to be no prepositions that express the relation of AST-T to EV-T in (31b) (‘properly containing’, which is of course not a preposition)

- In the domain of prepositions, we are generally free to reverse which noun-phrase is used as the figure, and which as the ground—quite simply, by merging them in the opposite order:

(32) a. The square is in the circle.
   b. The circle is in the square.

- However, this kind of reversal is decidedly unavailable when we look at the temporal-aspectual structure of the clause

  ∘ The reason, quite simply, is that the functional skeleton $T^0 \gg Asp^0 \gg v^0/V^0$ is fixed

(25) a. $\begin{array}{c}
                  & \text{UT-T} \\
                & \text{TP} \\
                & \text{TP} \\
    T^0 \rightarrow & \text{AspP} \\
                    & \text{AspP} \\
     \text{AST-T} \rightarrow & \text{AspP} \\
                       & \text{VP} \\
      \text{EV-T} \rightarrow & \text{VP} \\
  \end{array}$

  ∘ in other words, we don’t have the freedom to build a clause the other way around—$v^0/V^0 \gg Asp^0 \gg T^0$—just because we need to invert the spatio-temporal relations
  - i.e., we don’t have the same kind of freedom exemplified in (32a–b)

⇒ Consequently, when Asp$^0$ does its job of mediating between AST-T and EV-T, it is fixed which temporal span acts as the “figure”, and which as the “ground”

- If there is no prepositional/locative structure that can convey the perfective aspect, we must ask: How is the perfective conveyed?

  ∘ The answer to this question does not follow logically from what has been said so far
  - we might have found that we live in a world where there is simply no way to express the perfective
  - but of course, it turns out that this is not the world we live in
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The empirical answer, however, has already been observed quite long ago in the typological literature:

“[P]erfectives are the unmarked members of any aspectual opposition based on perfectivity.”

[Comrie 1978:21]

This “unmarkedness” is probably not a matter of morphophonology alone

– i.e., the locative/prepositional element facilitating the progressive is just phonologically null

– since we just spent time showing that there aren’t really locative/prepositional elements with the right semantics to do this

➤ Rather, it means that when there is no morphosyntactic structure corresponding to Asp⁰, perfective interpretation arises

– in other words, the perfective is the default

• which is, of course, the other sense of “unmarkedness”

We now have the pieces in place to assemble an account for the directionality universal of ergative splits, repeated once more below:

(1) \begin{align*}
\text{erg/abs} & \quad \quad \text{nom/acc} \\
\text{perfective} & \quad \quad \text{imperfective} & \quad \quad \text{progressive}
\end{align*}

[Coon 2010, following Dixon 1994]

(33) THE GRAMMATICAL BASIS FOR ASPECT-BASED SPLIT ERGATIVITY

1. In an otherwise ergatively-aligned language, complex locative structure creates the appearance of a NOM/ACC pattern

2. Locative structure is used to convey temporal and aspectual information, cross-linguistically. Specifically, the heads T⁰ and Asp⁰ denote preposition-like relations between UT-T and ASP-T, and between ASP-T and EV-T, respectively.

3. There is no preposition that describes the relation of ASP-T to EV-T, as the two stand in the perfective.

∴ The perfective cannot involve locative structure, and therefore does not introduce the more complex structure that alters the original ergative alignment.

➤ Let us convince ourselves that this predicts the directionality universal:

– suppose we start with a NOM/ACC language (i.e., a language that has NOM/ACC alignment in the perfective)

– and that following (33), a locative structure is used to form, e.g., the progressive
(34) a. I\textsubscript{NOM} read the book\textsubscript{ACC}.  
    (pseudo-English-#1) 
    b. I\textsubscript{NOM} am [PP at reading a book].  
    o by the very definition of NOM/ACC alignment, the subject of (34a) (a 
      transitive) and the subject of (34b) will receive the same marking  
    ! Consequently, the language will not shift out of a NOM/ACC alignment in the 
    progressive\footnote{To be precise, it should be possible—given Coon’s 
      proposal—to find a language that shifts out of a NOM/ACC alignment 
      and into a “neutral” alignment, in the progressive; just not into an 
      ERG/ABS alignment.}  
      - i.e., it will not start grouping the subject of (34b) with the object of (34a)  
    • For completeness, let us change the original alignment of our pseudo-English to an 
      ERG/ABS alignment, and see how things turn out  
(35) a. I\textsubscript{ERG} read the book\textsubscript{ABS}.  
    (pseudo-English-#2) 
    b. I\textsubscript{ABS} am [PP at reading a book].  
    o this time—by the very definition of ERG/ABS alignment—the object of (34a) (a 
      transitive) and the subject of (34b) will receive the same marking  
    ⇒ Consequently, the language appears to shift out of a NOM/ACC alignment in the 
      progressive  
      - i.e., it will not start grouping the subject of (34b) with the object of (34a)  
    • Finally, if the locative structure embeds a nominal, we could find a possessive 
      structure:  
(36) a. I\textsubscript{A} read the book\textsubscript{P}.  
    (pseudo-English-#3) 
    b. Happens [DP My\textsubscript{<?>} [NP reading a book]].  
    o If we find a language where GEN is syncretic with P’s marking, across 
      the board (but crucially, distinct from NOM), we would actually have a 
      counterexample to (1)  
      - I don’t know of such a language  
      ➤ On the other hand, if GEN is syncretic with A’s marking, across the board (as 
        in Chol)—  
      - we get an ERG/ABS alignment, again  
      - since the possessor in (36b) will be marked just like A in (36a)  

\textbf{Appendix: Imperfective vs. Progressive}  
• Coon’s proposal, narrowly construed, predicts that there should not be languages 
  that manifest an ergative split between the perfective and the progressive, but 
  group the imperfective with the former, rather than the latter  
  - i.e., the ERG/ABS alignment persists in the imperfective  
➤ but we have already seen that Basque manifests precisely this pattern
There is rather compelling evidence for a diachronic explanation, in this case:

- the Basque imperfective marker is -tzen
  - which almost certainly came from -tze + -n
    · which is the gerund-like nominalizing suffix (-tze) + the LOCATIVE adposition (-n)
  - and it appears that in older varieties of Basque, these were treated as true locatives (Laka 2006:91)
    · possibly even triggering an ergative split
  - over time, -tzen became grammaticalized (i.e., lost its status as a locative selecting a nominal)
    ⇒ and what was a bi-clausal construction became mono-clausal

But Importantly, there is evidence that the very same process is currently applying to the progressive, in eastern dialects of Basque (Laka 2006:189)

- -n + ari is being grammaticalized into an unanalyzed complex
  ⇒ and the ergative split is going away

References


This is svn-revision 1553.